

Joseph L. Thomas  
Director  
(302) 855-7801 Office  
(302) 855-7805 Fax  
(302) 855-7803 Office After Hours  
(302) 855-7800 Fax After Hours



*Sussex County*  
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER  
21303 AIRPORT ROAD  
P.O. BOX 589  
GEORGETOWN, DE 19947

## **Sussex County emergency managers urge public readiness for 2006 Atlantic hurricane season**

***Forecasters calling for active season, which begins June 1***

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

**Thursday  
June 1, 2006**

As another Atlantic hurricane season commences, and with forecasts for an above-average year of storm activity in 2006, the Sussex County Emergency Operations Center is taking this opportunity to remind residents and visitors to southern Delaware that they need to prepare now.

Preparation in advance of a storm is key to limiting or preventing loss of property, as well as loss of life.

“From what we’ve seen in the last few years, particularly last year with Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast, it’s imperative that people plan ahead and prepare themselves in the event that the area is staring down a major storm,” said Joseph Thomas, director of the Sussex County EOC. “It is also very important that our residents and visitors follow these storms when they do form, keep track of the forecasts, and then heed the advice of their emergency managers and public officials.”

To help make the storm season safer for everyone, here are some steps you can take to make your home and family ready for the hurricane season:

- Be prepared to evacuate. Plan your evacuation route now. Emergency managers will notify the public, via the media, of what areas should evacuate and when. In the event you evacuate, take a storm kit with you. Take valuable and/or important papers with you. Secure your house by locking the windows and doors. Turn off all utilities (gas,

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water, electric, etc.) Notify a family member or someone close to you outside the evacuation area of your destination.

- Property owners who have homes along the coast may want to check to see that all outdoor items are secure and not subject to being blown around when a hurricane and/or storm watch is put in effect. Property owners also will need to secure their boats. Area residents should clear rainspouts and gutters and trim any trees that may pose a problem during high winds.
- Have a family disaster kit. This kit should include the following items:
  - A three-day supply of water. This should include at least one gallon of water per person per day;
  - Non-perishable foods and a manual can opener;
  - A change of clothes and shoes for each person;
  - Prescription medicines;
  - A blanket or sleeping bag and pillow for each person;
  - Personal hygiene items;
  - A flashlight and extra batteries for each person;
  - Special needs items such as formula and diapers for infants and items needed for elderly or disabled family members;
  - A portable radio with extra batteries;
  - Money. During power outages ATM machines will not work;
  - Fuel. Gas pumps are also affected by power outages, so it is a good idea to have fuel in advance.
- In the event of an approaching storm, try to make your plans for traveling during daylight hours. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO MAKE PLANS OR TO PURCHASE GASOLINE AND SUPPLIES.** When a storm watch is issued, you should monitor the storm on the radio and television. An evacuation could take 24 to 36 hours prior to a storm's onset.
- If ordered to evacuate and seek shelter elsewhere, follow the instructions of local emergency managers on where to seek shelter. Authorities will announce shelter locations in advance of their

opening. Make provisions for your pets, however, as many shelters will not accept animals.

- If not ordered to evacuate, and you decide to take shelter in your home, have your disaster kit ready. Keep your important papers with you or store them in the highest, safest place in your home, and in a waterproof container. Even if you shelter in place, you need to secure your home by locking the doors and windows. Turn off all utilities (gas, water, electric, etc). Monitor the storm by portable radio to keep up with the latest information. Stay indoors. Try to stay in an inside room away from doors and windows.
- Use your phone sparingly. Make only essential calls and keep the calls brief. Report emergencies to 911. When calling in emergencies, identify yourself and your location speaking clearly and calmly. If you have a cell phone, make sure it is charged and ready to use at all times. But remember, cell phones might not work in your area during, and especially after, the storm.

Hurricanes can have devastating effects, as we all have seen. In the event a hurricane hits our area, expect polluted water, limited communications, no electricity, overflowing or backed up sewers, undermined foundations, beach erosion and heavy damage to homes and roadways.

Do not re-enter the area until recommended to do so by local authorities. As you re-enter the area, be aware of possible hazards such as downed trees and power lines. Be aware of debris and water on roadways. Have your identification and important legal papers ready to show officials proof of residency upon re-entering. Continue to use your emergency water supply or boil water until you are notified that the drinking water is safe. Take precautions to prevent fires.

Sussex County officials continue to plan, prepare and work with outside agencies to ready Sussex County for hurricane season, which ends Nov. 30. We can all weather the storm if we plan now, rather than wait until later.

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**For more information on preparing for the hurricane season, contact Debbie Jones, Public Information Officer, at (302) 855-7801 or visit our Web site at [www.sussexcountyde.gov](http://www.sussexcountyde.gov).**